

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1716

INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L IBADAN 251

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SPOP, PINS, PINT, NI

SUBJ: REACTIONS IN WESTERN STATE

REF: LAGOS 4125, KADUNA 370

1. SUMMARY - EXPRESSIONS OF PRIVATE AND MEDIA OPINION IN WESTERN STATE UNANIMOUSLY CONDEMN PROVISIONAL CENSUS RESULTS AS UNBELIEVABLE AND RIDICULOUS. PRIVATELY, EVEN HIGH RANKING OFFICIALS SEEM ANGRY AND FRUSTRATED. IF PROVISIONAL FIGURES ARE VALIDATED WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES, WHICH SEEMS LIKELY, TRADITIONAL YORUBA ENMITY TOWARD NORTHERNERS IS LIKELY TO BECOME REVENGE-SEEKING AND - AS VIEWED FROM WEST - UNSTABLIZING. END SUMMARY

2. PRIVATE REACTIONS AROUND IBADAN, FROM HIGH BUREAUCRATS TO TRADESMEN AND SERVANTS, AND REPORTS FROM OTHER AREAS OF STATE CONTINUE TO INDICATE UNANIMOUS ANGER AND FRUSTRATION OVER PROVISIONAL CENSUS RESULTS. NEW SMG DESCRIBES RESULTS AS "RIDICULOUS, A BIGGER TRAVESTY THAN EVER"; APPEALS COURT JUSTICE, WHO SERVED LONG PERIOD IN NORTH, SEES CENSUS AS "EXERCISE IN (NOTHERN) CHICHANERY, DEALING

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SERIOUS SETBACK TO PATRIOTS OF UNITY"; RANKING POLICE OF-

FICIAL BLAMES RESULTS ON "OUR (YORUBA) STUPIDITY, FOR TRYING TO BE HONEST". TRADESMEN AND MARKET MAMMIES CAN BE PROVOKED TO ARM-WAVING DENUNCIATIONS BY MENTION OF CENSUS. ONE ILLITERATE FIGURED OUT POLITICAL ODDS: "TWO NORTHERNERS FOR EVERY SOUTHERNER", HE SPAT.

3. GOVERNOR ROTIMI REPORTED TO HAVE TOLD ONE CONFIDANT HE HAD DONE BEST WITHIN SMC AND ASKED RHETORICALLY WHAT ELSE COULD BE DONE. AT RECENT POLO EXERCISE HE SAT LIKE BUDDHA WHILE SEVERAL MEMBERS HIS BUREAUCRACY AND A LEBANESE BUSINESSMAN OUTBID ONE ANOTHER IN RIDICULING CENSUS RESULTS.

4. NO ONE SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT EXPERT RE-EVALUATION OF PROVISIONAL FIGURES WILL ALTER RESULT SIGNIFICANTLY, ALTHOUGH BOTH LOCAL NEWSPAPERS HAVE USED RE-EVALUATION AS PEG FOR CRITICISM OF RESULTS. FEW ALSO VENTURE IDEAS ABOUT HOW "INJUSTICE" MIGHT BE RECTIFIED OR ANY OTHER PLAN OF YORUBA ACTION. A FEW LOWER ECHELON OFFICIALS HAVE VOICED HOPE OR CERTAINTY THAT FMG WILL DICTATE EQUAL REPRESENTATION FROM EACH STATE AS QUID PRO QUO FOR RESTORATION CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT; OR THAT "OUR (YORUBA) MILITARY BOYS WILL NOT TAKE THIS LYING DOWN", BUT MOST KNOWLEDGABLE SOURCES APPEAR TO FEEL BEATEN, FRUSTRATED AND WITHOUT HOPE. TRADE UNIONIST J. O. JAMES HINTS THAT FRUSTRATION MORE APPARENT THAN REAL, AND THAT UNKNOWN COUNTER-STRATEGY IS BEING PLANNED BY UNIDENTIFIED YORUBA LEADERS. HE ALSO THINKS SPLIT WITHIN MILITARY OVER ISSUE IS VERY DEEP.

5. REPORTS EMANATING FROM NORTH HAVE RUBBED SALT IN WOUNDS. ARGUMENT THAT 1973 RESULTS REFLECT WESTERN-RIGGED DISHONESTY IN 1963 COUNT; AND BP COMMISSIONER FOR INFORMATION'S RECENT SUGGESTION THAT FMG MAKE HAUSA SOLE OFFICIAL NIGERIAN LANGUAGE - AS "MOST CULTURALLY DEVELOPED OF THE VARIOUS LANGUAGES IN THE COUNTRY (SPOKEN) BY MOST PEOPLE IN NIGERIA" - ARE INFURIATING TO YORUBA. MAY 19 DAILY SKETCH TOOK ISSUE WITH NWS GOVERNOR FARUK'S REPORTED STATEMENT THAT CENSUS WAS "MOST REEALISTIC AND THOROUGH POPULATION HEAD-COUNT EVER CONDUCTED IN THIS COUNTRY" AS A "SUBTLE ATTEMPT TO PRE-EMPT THE WORK OF THE EXPERTS AND TO FOIST UPON THE PEOPLE A PRO-CONFIDENTIAL

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VISIONAL FIGURE WHICH HAS ALREADY RAISED A LOT OF DOUBTS AND FEARS IN SHORT, WE DO NOT REGARD THE PROVISIONAL FIGURE...AS THE RESULT OF A REALISTIC OR THOROUGH HEAD-COUNT". SIMILARLY, SKETCH ON MAY 29 USED NCS GOVERNOR KYARI'S APPARENTLY INNOCUOUS ASSERTION THAT "NIGERIANS WILL REMAIN AS ONE PEOPLE WITH ONE DESTINY FOREVER" TO HARP ON ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN DISASTER RELIEF AFFORDED OTHER STATES VS. WS IN TIME OF NEED; "FAR FROM

SATISFACTORY" REVENUE ALLOCATION FORMULA; AND CENSUS RESULTS. EDITORIAL CONCLUDES, "IT IS OUR VIEW THAT THE DIFFERENT GOVERNORS HAVE BEEN LESS THAN SINCERE WITH ONE ANOTHER OVER THE OUTCOME OF THE 1973 CENSUS. OTHERWISE, THE NATION WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN TREATED TO SUCH A LIVETZOL-CANO BY WAY OF A PROVISIONAL FIGURE WHICH IS SO PREGNANT WITH DANGERS".

6. NIGERIAN TRIBUNE UNCHARACTERISTICALLY PASSED UP OPPORTUNITY TO CRITICIZE GOVERNMENT OVER CENSUS ISSUE UNTIL MAY 31, WHEN GINGERLY ARTICLE APPEARED BY LOCAL COLUMNIST Q 589,8,& "WHY SUCH FIGURES THAT CANNOT BE RELIED ON FOR PLANNING SHOULD BE RELEASED AT ALL FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION... WE ARE TOO NEAR THE UGLY EVENTS OF THE PAST TO IGNORE THE SALUTARY BUT COSTLY LESSONS OF OUR RECENT HISTORY". THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A HARD-HITTING EDITORIAL ON JUNE 4, WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE RESULTS AS "SIMPLY UNBELIEVABLE", "A WASTED EFFORT", "BEYOND THE LIMITS OF CREDIBILITY" AND "UNACCEPTABLE TO A LARGE SECTION OF THE NIGERIAN PEOPLE". EDITORIAL CRITICIZED DECISION TO RELEASE FIGURES, WHICH CAUSE "DEPRESSION, ANGER AND FEAR"; AND FARUK'S ENDORSEMENT OF THEM. IT SEEMED STATISTICALLY AND LOGICALLY THE MORE DRAMATIC ASPECTS OF THE 1973 COUNT, BOTH COMPARED TO THE 1963 FIGURES AND TO EASILY OBSERVABLE DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AFFECTING THE INDIVIDUAL STATES. IT NOTED THAT ENUMERATION FORMS WERE NOT RETURNED FROM SOME STATES TO LAGOS AT THE PROPER TIME, AND "THE POSSIBILITY OF HUMAN ERROR"; AND SUGGESTED MEANS FOR CROSS-CHECKING THE RESULTS. ON JUNE 5, TRIBUNE CONTINUED WITH AN ARTICLE BY TEN LOCAL COMMENTATORS WHICH, PURPORTING TO SUGGEST AREAS FOR CROSS-CHECKING, AGAIN POINTED OUT THE GLARING ANOMOLIES IN THE FIGURES; AND AN EDITORIAL SUGGESTING THE CENSUS BE SCRAPPED AND A MORATORIUM ON CENSUS TAKING FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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THIRTY YEARS BECAUSE OF THE "POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS" OF THE 1973 RESULTS. THE EDITORIAL WAS REPEATED ON JUNE 6.

7. COMMENT: ASSUMING PROVISIONAL FIGURES VALIDATED WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL MODIFICATIONS, YORUBA WILL BE OVERWHELMINGLY CONVINCED THEY HAVE BEEN CHEATED. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHAT THEY ARE ABLE TO DO ABOUT IT, AND EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO SEE ANYTHING FMG OR ANYONE ELSE MIGHT DO TO SOFTEN RENEWED BITTERNESS AND ENMITY BETWEEN WESTERN STATE POPULATION AND THE NORTH. ONE THING SEEMS CERTAIN: THOSE IN YORUBA SOCIETY WHO COUNSEL MODERATION, COMPROMISE AND UNITY HAVE RECEIVED SEVERE SETBACK, AS HAVE ANY BUDDING NOTIONS OF HONESTY OR FAIR DEALING WITH NORTHERN NEIGHBORS. AS SEEN FROM WESTERN STATE, CENSUS RESULTS ARE MOST UNSTABILIZING POLITICAL FACTOR TO HIT COUNTRY SINCE

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